



U.S. Immigration  
and Customs  
Enforcement

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# News Release

## **TWO NEW ORLEANS MEN SENTENCED FOR SELLING FALSE IDENTITIES TO PURPORTED MEMBERS OF TERRORIST ORGANIZATION**

*Both men were aware that Abu Sayyaf was an active terrorist organization*

JACKSON, MISS. – Michael A. Holt, Special Agent-in-Charge in New Orleans for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Dunn Lampton, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Mississippi announced today that two New Orleans men, **Cedric Carpenter** and **Lamont Ranson** were sentenced for their involvement in a conspiracy to sell false documents to people they thought were members of Abu Sayyaf, a Philippines-based group that is designated as a foreign terrorist organization. Carpenter was sentenced to 63 months of imprisonment; to be followed by three years of supervised release and was ordered to pay a \$2000 fine. Ranson was sentenced to 29 months of imprisonment; to be followed by three years of supervised release and also was fined \$2000.



Both defendants entered guilty pleas in late February of this year before U.S. District Judge Tom S. Lee in Jackson, Mississippi, where the defendants had traveled during the conspiracy. Ranson and Carpenter pled guilty to conspiring to provide material support to a known terrorist organization. Carpenter, whose status as a convicted felon prohibited him from owning a gun, also pleaded guilty to possessing a firearm at the time of his arrest in New Orleans.

Carpenter and Ranson agreed to produce false identification documents, namely, Mississippi identification cards, Social Security cards, and birth certificates, knowing that the intended recipients of the false identification documents were represented to be members of Abu Sayyaf. Pursuant to the Immigration and Nationality Act, Abu Sayyaf was designated as a foreign terrorist organization in October 1997 and has been re-designated every two years thereafter, in 1999, 2001, and 2003.

“The sentencing of these two criminals who were willing to steal identities for the purposes of producing and selling fraudulent identification documents to purported members of a known terrorist organization mark the successful conclusion of this investigation. ICE will continue to diligently pursue individuals that pose a serious threat to our homeland,” said Michael A. Holt, Special Agent-in-Charge in New Orleans for ICE. U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton praised the efforts of ICE for its investigative efforts.

ICE agents in New Orleans conducted an eight-month investigation of the criminal activities of Carpenter and Ranson. In April 2004, Carpenter and Ranson approached an individual on a cruise ship seeking illegal narcotics, and offering to provide false identity documents. Beginning in June 2004, Carpenter and Ranson had discussions with confidential informants of ICE, about a proposal to produce false identification documents for a group of individuals identified as members of Abu Sayyaf. Ranson was familiar with Abu Sayyaf from his prior service with the U.S. Navy in Far East.

During a series of telephone calls that followed, Carpenter and Ranson continued to describe their ability and willingness to produce authentic documents with fraudulent identifiers using pictures to be supplied by the informants. In late June 2004, Carpenter told one of the informants by telephone that he was then in Jackson, Mississippi to “line up” his contacts for producing the fraudulent identities.

According to the felony information, in early July 2004, Carpenter met with the informant and displayed a complete set of fraudulent identification documents (birth certificate, Social Security card, and Mississippi driver’s license) bearing Carpenter’s photograph and a stolen identity. After viewing the documents, the informant requested five sets of documents. Carpenter responded with an asking price of \$100,000, stating he wanted \$50,000 in currency and \$50,000 worth of heroin (about half a kilogram). In August 2004, Carpenter continued to express interest in completing the transaction, but, ultimately, no deal was ever concluded.

The U.S. Attorney emphasized that at no time in this case was there any imminent foreign terrorist threat to the United States. However, he added that this investigation was very important in helping to identify active criminal elements operating in the area who were willing to furnish fraudulent identity documents to willing purchasers regardless of who the intended recipients were or how such documents would be used.

# ICE #

*U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.*